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NEWS

WISER makes progress in Africa

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The WISER programme has delivered millions of pounds of benefits to people around Africa as well as improving their resilience to weather and climate shocks.

The WISER programme, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), was designed to deliver transformational change in the quality, accessibility and use of weather and climate information services in Africa.

The second phase of the programme closed at the end of September 2021 and has succeeded in delivering a wide range of achievements.

For every £1 spent through the Met Office managed programme, a benefit of £7- £26 has been accrued, resulting in over £200 million in socio-economic benefits due to the production, translation and use of co-produced weather and climate information.

The results from the programme are wide and varied. Marine information developed for Lake Victoria helped to reduce deaths by drowning by 30%. The High Impact Weather Lake System (HIGHWAY) project used 20 radio stations based around the shores of Lake Victoria and smartphone notifications to deliver the latest forecasts and severe weather warnings. Progress made by the project has generated over £32m in economic benefits each year for fishing communities connected to the lake.

In WISER's Strengthening Weather and Climate Services in Uganda project, nearly 200,000 farmers are now able to make more informed decisions on planting, cultivating and harvests. Laban Bamwenda lives in Irobe village in the Kibaale district of Uganda. He inherited six acres of land but has found it difficult to make a sustainable living from farming. Unexpected changes to the local climate made it hard for him to grow crops and earn a living. "I now use scientific weather and climate information to plan for my agricultural activities, a thing that was not possible before I received training and started getting updated weather information," Laban explained.

WISER delivers maximum value for money by working in partnership and collaboration, supporting capacity development and leveraging additional funds to ensure sustained service delivery and improved weather and climate services in Africa.

Met Office WISER programme manager, Kate Ferguson, said: "WISER has been a real success story, demonstrating how bringing together weather and climate scientists and end users to understand differing needs, and adapting services to meet those needs, can have a significant and sustained impact on the lives of millions of people vulnerable to weather and climate shocks."

Due to WISER 3.3 million households across East Africa are now able to access new or improved weather and climate information services, supported by 146 more effective products. The programme has enhanced the resilience of 8.2 million users by enabling them to make more informed decisions based on information that better meets their needs. For example, through the DARAJA project, which focused on increasing access to forecast information for those living in urban informal settlements, 98% of residents reported taking action to avoid household loss due to DARAJA services. As a result, 72% said they avoided personal damage and loss, such as saving income or protecting their home.

Over 270 organisations and institutions working across East Africa, such as numerous government departments and NGOs, are also now using new or improved weather and climate information to inform their decision making, with this information included in 29 plans and policies.

The current programme concluded during Africa Climate Week, a UNFCCC event hosted by the Government of Uganda where participants worked to accelerate collaboration and integration of climate action into global pandemic recovery.

You can read more about the achievements and learnings of WISER 2 in our latest blog by Programme Manager Kate Ferguson. There's also more information on the projects delivered through WISER on our case study webpage.

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